

BEFORE
 THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF
 SOUTH CAROLINA
 DOCKET NO. 2018-372-C – ORDER NO. 2019-____
 MARCH __, 2019

IN RE:

Application of Horry Telephone Cooperative, Inc. for an)	
Expansion of its Certificate of Public Convenience and)	ORDER GRANTING
Necessity to Provide Local Exchange and Exchange Access)	EXPEDITED REVIEW
Service to Customers Located in Certain Areas of the State)	AND APPROVING
of South Carolina)	APPLICATION
_____)	

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (“Commission”) on the application of Horry Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (“Applicant” or “HTC”) to expand its authority to provide local exchange and exchange access service to customers located in those areas of the State of South Carolina that are served by BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. d/b/a AT&T South Carolina (“AT&T”) in Marion County and Dillon County; and in those areas of the State of South Carolina that are served by Frontier Communications of the Carolinas, Inc. (“Frontier”) in Georgetown County where Applicant does not already have authority to provide such service. The Applicant further requests flexible regulation of local exchange service offerings. The Applicant has moved for expedited review of its Application and waiver of the formal evidentiary hearing. Upon review of the Application and all of the supporting documents submitted by the Applicant, we grant the requested relief.

The Applicant published a Notice of Filing of the request in newspapers of general circulation, as required by the Commission. The deadline to intervene in this matter was January 18, 2019.

The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (“ORS”) is a statutory party to this action. See S.C. Code Ann. § 58-4-10(B). On December 19, 2018, ORS filed a letter in this docket stating that it does not oppose the Commission granting HTC’s Application. HTC’s counsel has consulted with counsel for ORS, and ORS does not object to proceeding without a formal hearing in this matter.

No other comments or petitions to intervene were received in response to the notice. Thus, all interested persons have been afforded an opportunity for a hearing, as required by S.C. Code Ann. § 58-9-280(B), Section 1-23-320(a) of the South Carolina Administrative Procedures Act, and constitutional due process. Proceeding without a formal hearing in this matter would serve the public interest in administrative efficiency.

In support of its Application and request for expedited review of this matter, the Applicant has filed the verified testimony of Brent Groome. Mr. Groome’s testimony and the other supporting information included in the Applicant’s filings demonstrate the following:

HTC is an incumbent local exchange carrier (“ILEC”) and provides local exchange services, both as an ILEC within its ILEC service area and as a competitive local exchange carrier outside its ILEC service area, as well as intrastate exchange access service within geographical areas established by the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the “Commission”). HTC was formed in 1952 and has been providing local exchange service as an ILEC to rural areas in Horry County since that time. HTC’s former affiliate, HTC Communications, Inc. (which subsequently changed its name to HTC Communications, LLC) was granted a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity by the Commission in 1998 to provide local exchange and exchange access services to customers in Horry County and those portions of Georgetown County known as the Waccamaw Neck and the City of Georgetown. *See* Commission Order No. 98-323 in Docket No. 98-049-C. HTC acquired its wholly-owned subsidiary HTC Communications, LLC and assumed all its assets liabilities and obligations

on or about January 1, 2011, including all certifications and authorizations. *See* Commission Order Non. 2012-261 in Docket Nos. 1991-514-C, 1998-49-C, and 2007-402-C.

The Applicant seeks to amend its Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. §58-9-280 and the rules and regulations of the Commission, to permit it to provide local exchange and exchange access services to customers located in those areas of the State of South Carolina that are served by BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. d/b/a AT&T South Carolina (“AT&T”) in Marion County and Dillon County; and in those areas of the State of South Carolina that are served by Frontier Communications of the Carolinas, Inc. (“Frontier”) in Georgetown County where Applicant does not already have authority to provide such service. The Applicant further requests flexible regulation of local exchange service offerings.

HTC will provide similar service, under similar rates, terms and conditions, to customers located in the expanded area as it currently is providing to customers in its presently certificated service area. HTC will offer the service at rates comparable to those of the incumbent LEC serving the area. HTC will provide its local and interexchange services via a combination of traditional circuit switched (i.e., time division multiplexed or “TDM”) and voice over Internet protocol (“VoIP”) switching platforms. HTC’s TDM and VoIP-based services will be provided on its independently owned, facilities-based network, and when/where convenient, through resale of other telecommunications providers’ networks or services. All services are available twenty-four (24) hours per day, seven (7) days a week. A more complete description of the local exchange and exchange access services HTC proposes to offer in the State of South Carolina can be found in its existing tariffs that are on file with the Commission, which will be updated as necessary to reflect the provision of similar services in the expanded area. HTC will also offer broadband services and bundled services in the expanded area, which will not be tarified but will be offered under similar

rates, terms and conditions to those offered in HTC's currently certificated service area.

Amending the Applicant's certificate to expand its service area will serve the public interest. The Applicant is an established competitive local exchange carrier in South Carolina. Provision of service by the Applicant in the requested service area will enhance competition in the State of South Carolina by offering additional service options and high service quality to South Carolina telecommunications users.

As demonstrated in HTC's prior certification proceedings; the description of key personnel attached as Exhibit A to the Application; HTC's most recent Telecommunications Company Annual Report attached as Exhibit B to the Application; and the verified Testimony of Brent Groome filed in this docket on January 23, 2019, the Applicant has the technical, managerial, and financial resources necessary to provide service in the requested areas. The Applicant will provide services which meet the service standards of the Commission; the Applicant's provision of service will not adversely impact the availability of affordable local exchange service, and will not otherwise adversely impact the public interest; and the Applicant will support universally available telephone service at affordable rates. HTC's long history of providing high quality service as both an incumbent local exchange carrier within its ILEC area and as a competitive local exchange carrier in Horry and Georgetown Counties further attests to its ability to provide the requested services in South Carolina.

The Commission has previously granted Applicant's request for flexible regulation of its competitive local exchange telecommunications services. *See* Commission Order No. 98-974 in Docket No. 1998-049-C. Applicant requests the same treatment for local exchange telecommunications services provided in the expanded area for which it requests expanded certification.

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We find that the relief requested by the Applicant is in the public interest, and therefore, we approve the application and grant the relief sought therein.

This Order shall remain in full force and effect until further order of the Commission.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION:

Comer H. “Randy” Randall, Chairman

ATTEST:

Jocelyn Boyd, Chief Clerk/Administrator

(SEAL)